1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES	
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3	KOUICHI TANIGUCHI, :	
4	Petitioner : No. 10-1472	
5	v. :	
6	KAN PACIFIC SAIPAN, LTD. :	
7	x	
8	Washington, D.C.	
9	Tuesday, February 21, 2012	
10		
11	The above-entitled matter came on for ora	ι 1
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States	
13	at 11:14 a.m.	
14	APPEARANCES:	
15	MICHAEL S. FRIED, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of	
16	Petitioner.	
17	DAN HIMMELFARB, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf of	
18	the Respondent.	
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:14 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear
4	argument next in Case 10-1472, Kouichi Taniguchi v. Kan
5	Pacific Saipan, Limited.
6	Mr. Fried.
7	ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL S. FRIED
8	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
9	MR. FRIED: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
10	please the Court:
11	Our brief licks lists six categories of
12	authority demonstrating that the work of an interpreter
13	under 28 U.S.C. section 1920(6) is limited to spoken
14	communication. Primary among these is the Court
15	Interpreters Act itself, whose central provisions afford
16	simultaneous or consecutive spoken interpreter services.
17	When
18	JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can I make sure that I
19	understand the extent of your argument? Are you saying
20	that it's interpretation, oral interpretation, just in
21	the courtroom?
22	MR. FRIED: Well, Justice Sotomayor, I think
23	that it's a that there is a textual ambiguity in the
24	statute about the extent of covered spoken interpreter
25	services. One could argue it either way, and we

- 1 don't -- I am happy to proceed under either assumption.
- 2 But what is clear is that, however far it extends within
- 3 the area of spoken interpretation, document translation
- 4 is --
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I have to say that
- 6 if you read it the way you do, then what you are
- 7 suggesting is that for appointed experts, they only get
- 8 recompensed for the time they're testifying, because
- 9 that's the only time they spend in court.
- 10 MR. FRIED: Court-appointed experts, Your
- 11 Honor?
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes.
- 13 MR. FRIED: I think the legislative history
- 14 of that seems to indicate that that provision was
- 15 actually inserted into 1920(6) for a separate
- 16 housekeeping reason, because it parallels Rule 706 of
- 17 the Federal Rules of Evidence, which was a preexisting
- 18 rule addressing court-appointed experts, and simply put
- 19 it into the enumeration.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But court experts get
- 21 a -- get paid for their prep work.
- MR. FRIED: Yes, Your Honor. I -- I think
- 23 that -- that that may well be the case. But I -- I
- 24 think that the --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could I -- one further

- 1 question.
- 2 MR. FRIED: Of course.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I take all your
- 4 arguments, but I read the common dictionary and there is
- 5 no question that the primary meaning of "interpreter" is
- 6 interpretation of oral languages. But the dictionary is
- 7 broad enough to include translation work as well.
- 8 Given that the courts for 70 years have been
- 9 awarding, most of the them -- except for I think the
- 10 Seventh here, virtually every court over a 70-year
- 11 period has been awarding translation fees as -- as
- 12 authorized; why shouldn't that be enough for us?
- MR. FRIED: Well -- .
- 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Meaning, if the
- 15 dictionary term is broad enough and that's what the
- 16 courts have been doing and the world hasn't crashed,
- 17 despite one case where a large amount was given -- your
- 18 adversary points to the fact that most of the
- 19 translation fees tend to be fairly reasonable -- why
- 20 should we muck with what works?
- 21 MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, I think
- 22 that --
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I think I am drawing --
- 24 I am drawing from ways that my colleague next to me
- 25 usually asks a question.

- 1 (Laughter.)
- 2 MR. FRIED: Your Honor, I think the primary
- 3 reason why the Court should -- should not adopt that is
- 4 because it's -- it's inconsistent with the text.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: It's wrong is your answer,
- 6 right?
- 7 MR. FRIED: Yes, Your Honor.
- 8 And -- and it's also worth noting that the
- 9 courts -- none of the courts of appeals who have adopted
- 10 this construction of 1920(6) have considered or
- 11 addressed our primary arguments in this case. They
- 12 haven't addressed the uniform professional literature
- 13 addressing this -- this topic, the dictionaries in their
- 14 aggregate, the Administrative Office's interpretation of
- 15 this statute, the consistent congressional distinction
- 16 between written translation and spoken -- spoken
- interpretation that runs throughout the code.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Just out of curiosity, why
- 19 do you think that all these courts just took for granted
- 20 the opposite reading?
- 21 MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, I'm -- I'm --
- 22 I'm not sure that I have a -- a good answer to that.
- 23 I -- perhaps that they weren't presented with some of
- 24 these -- these arguments and didn't have the opportunity
- 25 to consider them.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Perhaps it was
- 2 Dr. Johnson's answer when a lady pointed out an error in
- 3 his dictionary and his answer was: "Stupidity, madam,
- 4 sheer stupidity."
- 5 (Laughter.)
- 6 MR. FRIED: I think -- I think, Your Honor,
- 7 that -- that Kan Pacific disputes very little of -- of
- 8 our central argument. Their discussion --
- JUSTICE BREYER: There are -- there are lots
- 10 of regions of the country, Puerto Rico for example,
- 11 where there are vast numbers of documents that have to
- 12 be translated if you go into Federal court, not
- 13 necessarily in the Commonwealth court. That's expensive
- 14 to people. And they might have thought for a long time,
- 15 while that expense won't go away, it's at least better
- 16 to have it paid by the loser than to have it paid by the
- 17 winner. So that's been the common practice.
- I don't think that's a foolish approach.
- 19 And you can find language in this, which is to go
- 20 back -- to go back to Justice Sotomayor --
- 21 MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, I think
- 22 that -- again, the -- the best reason to reject that
- 23 view is because it doesn't make a coherent whole of this
- 24 statute. These provisions operate together in a uniform
- 25 set of -- as a uniform set of policies for addressing a

- 1 common subject.
- 2 And the way they -- these provisions
- 3 interact in broad strokes that makes perfect sense in
- 4 our reading is that in the -- in the primary class of
- 5 cases that motivated the passage of this statute, namely
- 6 cases brought by the government where there were
- 7 significant constitutional confrontation clause concerns
- 8 about criminal defendants not understanding the spoken
- 9 proceedings, in those core class of cases the Congress
- 10 elected to pay for spoken interpreter services directly
- 11 in the first instance.
- Now, in the non-core class of cases
- 13 litigation, private civil litigation; the Congress
- 14 elected not to pay for these services, but in 1920(6) to
- 15 facilitate them in the lesser manner of providing that a
- 16 party that incurred these expenses could recover them at
- 17 the end of the case if it won.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: What do you think of the --
- 19 I mean, the First Circuit dealt with this, which deals a
- 20 lot with Puerto Rico, and it felt that this fell within
- 21 the idea of fees for exemplification, which is
- 22 certifying the document. And in fact, to certify a
- 23 document that comes into the Federal court in San Juan,
- 24 you have to have it translated very often. And so, the
- 25 translation cost is at least consistent with the idea

- 1 there of trying to -- you may -- you don't have to --
- 2 you may impose the cost on the loser.
- 3 MR. FRIED: Well, Justice Breyer, there was
- 4 actually a specific provision in this bill, in a prior
- 5 version of this bill that addressed the context of
- 6 Puerto Rico. And the significance of that provision is
- 7 that when the Congress was addressing written
- 8 translation, which was part of the -- part of that
- 9 provision, it specifically used the word "translation"
- 10 to refer to that.
- 11 And this just, again, confirms that the
- 12 usual congressional practice of differentiating between
- 13 these terms in -- in statutes generally was fully
- 14 applicable here, that the Congress knew the difference
- 15 between these terms, used them appropriately, and the
- 16 fact that having removed that -- that provision from the
- 17 statute, the statute as passed contains only the words
- 18 "interpreter" and "interpretation," and no forms of
- 19 "translate" just again reaffirms that -- that the
- 20 ordinary meaning of these terms should apply.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What of a document that
- 22 is -- that's read out in open court and the document is
- 23 a contract in another language, and the interpreter --
- 24 the witness presents the document and the interpreter
- 25 interprets it?

- 1 MR. FRIED: Your Honor, the professional
- 2 literature addresses this as sight interpretation or
- 3 sight translation, and it's uniformly recognized to be a
- 4 species of interpretation. It occurs -- the -- the
- 5 interpreter speaks aloud in the presence of the audience
- 6 being communicated to in the course of a spoken
- 7 proceeding.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But what if the -- if the
- 9 interpreter, being diligent, said, I'm going to have to
- 10 translate this document in open court, I would like to
- 11 have it in advance so I can be sure that my translation
- 12 is going to be accurate, so that in fact the interpreter
- 13 looks at the document and in in preparation for the
- 14 trial translates it?
- MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, I think that
- 16 the preparatory work that occurred outside of court
- 17 would not be compensable interpretation work. But when
- 18 the -- when the interpreter returned to court and gave
- 19 the oral interpretation of that document, that would
- 20 constitute interpretation.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But that -- but
- 22 she's not interpreting it. She's already got the thing
- 23 in whatever language, English, I guess. But I mean,
- 24 she's not interpreting, she's reading the English
- 25 translation.

- 1 MR. FRIED: That's true, Mr. Chief Justice.
- 2 But the key reason why that would constitute
- 3 interpretation is because the -- the interpreter is
- 4 speaking aloud, communicating in the course of a spoken
- 5 conversation to an audience who -- who doesn't speak
- 6 English or --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, I misunderstood
- 8 the hypothetical, then. I'm sorry.
- 9 MR. FRIED: Perhaps I did, Your Honor. I
- 10 apologize.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I thought it was a
- 12 situation where you have got a -- a -- a document in --
- in, say, French and the person translates it, or
- 14 interprets it -- I don't want to prejudge the issue --
- 15 and -- and then in English and then the person reads the
- 16 English thing in -- in court. That's not interpretation
- 17 at any point, is it?
- 18 MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, I think that
- 19 the literature does typically class the in-court oral
- 20 communication of its content as a form of
- 21 interpretation. But any ambiguity on this point
- 22 really -- really doesn't -- doesn't affect anything in
- 23 practice. I mean, any sight interpretation occurs as a
- 24 brief interval in a larger proceeding.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, is it true that as a

- 1 matter of common usage, when we are talking about oral
- 2 testimony in court we often use "interpretation" and
- 3 "translation" or "interpreter" and "translator" somewhat
- 4 interchangeably, but when we're talking about rendering
- 5 a document into a -- into a different language, we
- 6 generally talk about that as "translation." This is a
- 7 matter of common usage. Do you think that's correct?
- 8 MR. FRIED: If I understand Your Honor
- 9 correctly, yes. I think that the ordinary meaning of
- 10 "translate" applies to the context of -- the
- 11 communication of information in written documents. And
- 12 it's -- it's discrete from "interpretation," which --
- 13 which is limited to --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you didn't understand
- 15 the question.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That wasn't quite my
- 17 point.
- MR. FRIED: I'm sorry.
- 19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: My point was that I think
- 20 we say -- in fact, in a Supreme Court case, we said in
- 21 the Hernandez case, when we're talking about oral
- 22 testimony in Court, we tend to use "translator" or
- 23 "translate" and "interpreter" and "interpret" somewhat
- 24 interchangeably. Is that correct?
- MR. FRIED: I apologize, Your Honor. Yes,

- 1 you can use the word "translate" generically. There's
- 2 no question. Frequently in court, and I think out of
- 3 court as well, that some people can use the word
- 4 "translate" in a manner that doesn't differentiate
- 5 between modes. Our point is that -- that double meaning
- 6 doesn't apply to "interpreter," which has a single
- 7 narrow meaning limited to spoken communication.
- 8 And Kan Pacific's discussion of the
- 9 dictionaries is limited to a single dictionary,
- 10 Webster's Third. The majority of dictionaries
- 11 categorically exclude document translation from the
- 12 scope of --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Webster's Third, as I
- 14 recall, is the dictionary that defines "imply" to mean
- 15 "infer" --
- 16 MR. FRIED: It does, Your Honor --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- and "infer" to mean
- 18 "imply."
- 19 It's not a very good dictionary.
- 20 (Laughter.)
- 21 MR. FRIED: Well, the Court in the -- in the
- 22 MCI v. AT&T case did indicate that.
- 23 But -- but in any event, the -- on its
- 24 terms, that definition supports our reading over Kan
- 25 Pacific's because it does indicate, even as to that

- 1 dictionary definition, that the most common meaning of
- 2 the term is the meaning referring to spoken
- 3 communications. And this Court frequently looks to the
- 4 most common meaning for purposes of statutory
- 5 interpretation, as it did in Mallard in construing the
- 6 word "request," and in Ramsey in construing the word
- 7 "envelope."
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could we get back to the
- 9 issue. In the legislative history of this provision, is
- 10 there any indication that Congress explicitly rejected
- 11 translation work from its coverage?
- 12 MR. FRIED: I can talk -- there's a -- the
- 13 text does. The -- the text --
- 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Outside of the text. Is
- 15 there a statement by one of the sponsors in the
- 16 congressional bill?
- 17 MR. FRIED: I'm not -- I'm sorry.
- I'm not sure that there's an explicit
- 19 statement that I'm aware of in the legislative history.
- 20 There's a lot of provisions in the legislative history
- 21 which plainly presuppose that. And the Congress
- 22 received professional literature from -- documents from
- 23 the American Association of Language Specialists.
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Those are the other
- 25 provisions that they passed with respect to --

- 1 MR. FRIED: Specifically with respect to
- 2 costs, the Congress -- the House Report alludes to Rule
- 3 43(f), which is now 43(d), as a relevant preexisting
- 4 rule. And of course, it's undisputed that Rule 43(d)'s
- 5 cost provision is -- is limited to spoken communication
- 6 of interpreters. So there is that in the history as
- 7 well.
- But -- but I think that there's no doubt
- 9 that under the text of the statute, subsection (k) the
- 10 modes subsection, which appears at page 5a of the red
- 11 brief appendix as it was initially passed, expressly
- 12 says that the interpretation under -- under this section
- 13 must be done by using methods that all agree are limited
- 14 to spoken communication.
- Now, in the --
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So if a lawyer sits down
- 17 with an interpreter now in his office and says to the
- 18 interpreter, "I can't pay for translation work. Now,
- 19 you sit here and interpret what this letter says for
- 20 me."
- 21 Is that what we're asking lawyers to do
- 22 now --
- 23 MR. FRIED: Not at all, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- if we accept your
- 25 reading?

- 1 MR. FRIED: No, Your Honor. That would not
- 2 constitute interpreting, because it would not -- the
- 3 interpreter would not be communicating between live
- 4 parties in the context of a real-time proceeding.
- 5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But you would say that
- 6 might be different in a courtroom.
- 7 MR. FRIED: Well --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because the lawyer is
- 9 communicating something live. It could be in the
- 10 courtroom, but not outside.
- 11 MR. FRIED: That -- that's correct, Your
- 12 Honor.
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is there something
- 14 logical about this?
- 15 MR. FRIED: Yes, Your Honor, because in the
- 16 courtroom, in the context of a live spoken proceeding,
- 17 that satisfies all of the ordinary definitional elements
- 18 of interpreting. But that's not the case in somebody's
- 19 office in the presence of a single party and a written
- 20 document.
- 21 And -- and there's no question, Your Honor,
- 22 that to the extent there's any ambiguity with respect to
- 23 unusual examples, this is a distinction that's
- 24 absolutely clear in the vast majority of real world
- 25 incidents.

- 1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about depositions?
- 2 The translation would be of the spoken word, but it
- 3 wouldn't be in court.
- 4 MR. FRIED: Well, I do think there -- one
- 5 could potentially argue that spoken interpretation at a
- 6 deposition isn't covered, in light of some of the
- 7 dictionaries like Black's Law Dictionary, which
- 8 indicates that the word is restricted to people who work
- 9 in trial. But I certainly think that it could be argued
- 10 either way, in a case where --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, what's -- what's
- 12 your position? I -- I take a deposition in my law
- 13 office and I have to have an interpreter there. Is that
- 14 recoverable or not?
- 15 MR. FRIED: I'm not sure we have a
- 16 definitive -- I think you could argue it either way,
- 17 Your Honor. It doesn't affect our case.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, how do you think it
- 19 affects the way you read the statute? What do you think
- 20 should be the result?
- 21 MR. FRIED: I think there's a reasonable
- 22 reading that that should be covered. I think that's
- 23 certainly -- we have no vested interest in opposing
- 24 that.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Let me ask you this

- 1 question: In the background here, is there some concern
- 2 that we're going to have minor cases but with huge
- 3 translation costs, and it would be simply unfair? And
- 4 if the answer to that is yes, isn't that taken care of
- 5 by the statutory direction that the Court "may" give
- 6 costs?
- 7 MR. FRIED: Well, Your Honor, that sort of
- 8 discretion demonstrably does not prevent the issuance of
- 9 these large awards, because there have been a number of
- 10 large awards issued notwithstanding that discretion.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, isn't that an abuse
- 12 of discretion?
- MR. FRIED: Well, not necessarily, Your
- 14 Honor. The -- the district courts --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I mean, in other
- 16 words, if the court sees that the -- the cost of
- 17 preparing documents into an English language is quite
- 18 substantial in light of what's involved in the case, and
- 19 it's just not fair to award them, can't that court in
- 20 its discretion deny them, or is that not the way it
- 21 works?
- MR. FRIED: That's the way it works, Your
- 23 Honor. But I don't think that that discretion is
- 24 sufficient to eliminate the deterrent effect that this
- 25 court has recognized in cases like Farmer and

- 1 Fleischmann, because it occurs at the end of the case,
- 2 after a litigant has already decided whether to bring
- 3 suit. The deterrent effect occurs ex ante when a
- 4 risk-averse litigant has to decide whether to bring the
- 5 case.
- 6 But I -- I would just note that these sorts
- 7 of policy questions, Your Honor, arise in the context of
- 8 language that by its terms extends to interpreting and
- 9 not translating. And we would say that the relevant
- 10 policy question is simply whether there are sensible
- 11 reasons to -- that Congress may have drawn a line where
- 12 it did. And plainly, there are adequate reasons that
- 13 these services, document translation services that were
- 14 excluded, are potentially large and fall under the
- 15 general principles that this Court has recognized are --
- 16 are presumptively not frequently avoided --
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I quess I'm -- I'm
- 18 having a problem with they're "potentially large."
- 19 Interpretive services are potentially large, although
- 20 you claim that they don't -- they have sort of a
- 21 terminus point. I've been in trials where we've had
- 22 multiple languages simultaneously being translated to
- 23 multiple defendants, with witnesses speaking even other
- 24 languages. I was in the Southern District of New York.
- 25 And fees there without translation, just for the oral

- 1 courtroom work, sometimes went ahead for months.
- 2 So potentiality's not the question. If
- 3 you're talking about disproportionality, then that goes
- 4 to the word "reasonable" in the statute, doesn't it? I
- 5 mean, the Ortho case you point to, the court did sizably
- 6 cut the translation fees. And more importantly, from
- 7 the little I can tell, that was a huge patent case with
- 8 a patent that was claimed to control 60 percent of a
- 9 market.
- 10 So I don't know that that was a small case
- 11 by anyone's definition.
- MR. FRIED: Certainly, Your Honor.
- 13 As to the difference, I mean, I'm not aware
- 14 of -- under this statute, an interpreter's spoken
- 15 interpretation award approaching anywhere near some of
- 16 the larger document translation awards that have been
- 17 issued. But nonetheless, I am not denying that there
- 18 could be large interpreter awards in some cases. But
- 19 the fact is that adding on document translation awards
- 20 is additive.
- 21 The sort of necessity review that would be
- 22 necessary to police these document translation awards
- 23 would be guite burdensome on the district courts. And
- 24 in fact, the necessity standard is actually translation
- 25 awards is additive. The sort of necessity review that

- 1 would be necessary to police these document translation
- 2 awards would be quite burdensome on the district courts,
- 3 and in fact the necessity standard is actually
- 4 particularly problematic to apply to translations, Your
- 5 Honor, because the fact is you don't know what a
- 6 document says until it has been translated. And the
- 7 exercise of trying to go back and reconstruct ex ante
- 8 what a -- whether a person was reasonably necessary in
- 9 causing to be translated something that they didn't know
- 10 what it meant is likely to lead to very subjective --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I haven't --I was
- 12 interested here that the amici on your side consists of
- 13 some professors and the, I guess the trade associations
- of interpreters or translators, but the people who would
- 15 have the financial stake in it, the defense bar, the
- 16 plaintiff's bar in certain circumstances, have not filed
- 17 any brief. And I tend, though not putting a lot of
- 18 weight on it, to take it as a sign, along with the long
- 19 period of time, that there hasn't been some tremendous
- 20 financial problem. What evidence is there that there
- 21 has been? I see a few cases, but in general.
- MR. FRIED: Your Honor, I am not at all
- 23 suggesting that there has been a tremendous financial
- 24 strain on the system. We are saying that this is a
- 25 statute that, by its plain language, extends to --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: The plain language argument
- 2 I got. But how many years has the great bulk of the
- 3 court been going the other way?
- 4 MR. FRIED: I'm sorry, Your Honor, I
- 5 actually, I didn't hear the end of your question.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: How many years has, would
- 7 you say, the great bulk of the Federal system been
- 8 deciding this differently from the way you think it
- 9 should be?
- 10 MR. FRIED: I'm not sure that it is the
- 11 great bulk. I mean, there's been a
- 12 significant disagreement--
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: That's the bulk.
- MR. FRIED: Well, I think it's -- I think
- 15 that it's increased over time.
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, when did all this rot
- 17 set in, in your opinion. How long?
- 18 MR. FRIED: I'm not sure that I could
- 19 pinpoint a date, Your Honor.
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: When is the first one?
- MR. FRIED: Your Honor, I'm not sure. I
- 22 will have to find out while my adversary is arguing what
- 23 the first decision was.
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As far back as 19 -- It
- 25 was a district court. But it was as far back as the

- 1 1930s. Some in the '40s, some in the '50s.
- 2 MR. FRIED: Certainly it wasn't construing
- 3 1920(6) at that time, Your Honor.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, no. Clearly. But
- 5 these awards have been common.
- 6 MR. FRIED: Your Honor --
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: You have a case cited from
- 8 1812. I take it that's it?
- 9 MR. FRIED: Certainly, Your Honor. Um,
- 10 addressing --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought -- I thought we
- 12 were addressing not whether it's a good idea to give
- 13 fees, but whether fees are payable under this particular
- 14 statute, right? Which was enacted when?
- MR. FRIED: 1978, Your Honor.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: 1978. That's not so long
- 17 ago.
- 18 MR. FRIED: Absolutely correct, Your Honor.
- 19 We agree. And the structural reasons are -- within the
- 20 Court Interpreters Act itself are every bit as powerful
- 21 as the ordinary textual indicia that support our
- 22 reading. And in fact Kan Pacific's argument that the
- 23 word "interpreters" should be assigned different
- 24 meanings in different parts of the statute is -- is
- 25 unsupported.

- 1 Kan Pacific relies on what it characterizes
- 2 as different language in section 2, which put in 1827
- 3 and 1828, and section 7, which put in the cost
- 4 provision. And it notes that section 2 sometimes uses
- 5 the broader phrase "interpreters in courts of the United
- 6 States, "whereas section 7 uses the word "interpreters"
- 7 alone.
- 8 But Kan Pacific doesn't examine the context
- 9 in which section 2 does and does not use that broader
- 10 phrase. And those specifics really undermine any
- 11 argument one might make along those lines. As
- originally passed in section 2, 1827 contains 26
- occurrences of the word "interpreter;" not counting the
- 14 title. And of those 26 cases, 24 simply use the word
- 15 "interpreter" by itself. So there is certainly at the
- 16 very threshold no overarching pattern of usage
- 17 distinction between them.
- More fundamentally, though, the substantive
- 19 provisions addressing the use of interpreters by parties
- 20 in these cases in 1827 do so without using that broader
- 21 phrase. Subsection (d) --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Do so without --
- 23 MR. FRIED: I'm sorry, Your Honor. Without
- 24 using the broader phrase "in courts of the United
- 25 States."

- 1 Subsection (d) is the provision that -- that
- 2 governs the use of interpreters in cases brought by the
- 3 government. This appears at page 2a of the red brief
- 4 appendix, and it simply provides that upon a
- 5 determination of need, the services of an interpreter
- 6 will be used in these cases.
- 7 The only two provisions that use the phrase
- 8 "interpreters in courts to the United States" are
- 9 subsections (a) and (b), which are both at 1a of the red
- 10 brief appendix, and both of these provisions -- are
- 11 addressing the scope of the Administrative Office's
- 12 duties under the statute. And as such, it simply makes
- 13 clear that, in keeping with the office's ordinary
- 14 function, it's -- it's facilitating the work of the
- 15 Federal courts and making clear that the offices -- and,
- 16 for instance, certifying interpreters for the State
- 17 courts.
- 18 So nothing in this language suggests in any
- 19 way that the -- that the word "interpreter" means
- 20 something different in different places or that the
- 21 services of an interpreter are viewed as embracing the
- 22 same thing.
- So we think that a variety of indicia of
- 24 meaning converge in this case to support the conclusion
- that 1920(6) is limited to spoken communication.

- If there are no further questions, I will
- 2 reserve the balance of my time.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 4 Mr. Fried.
- 5 Mr. Himmelfarb.
- 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF DAN HIMMELFARB
- 7 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 8 MR. HIMMELFARB: Thank you,
- 9 Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court:
- 10 The word "interpreter" has two possible
- 11 meanings that are relevant here, a broader one and a
- 12 narrower one. The broader meaning is a person who
- 13 translates from one language to another. Under this
- 14 definition the terms "interpreter" and "translator" are
- 15 used interchangeably.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Have you ever seen a book,
- 17 you know, translated from a foreign language, you know,
- 18 "War and Peace," you know, and you are at the mercy of
- 19 what we call the translator, and it says on the fly
- 20 page, you know, "John Smith," comma, "Trans.," period.
- 21 Does it ever say "John Smith," comma, "Int," period?
- 22 MR. HIMMELFARB: It is used in the narrower
- 23 sense in that context, I think, Justice Scalia. The
- 24 narrower meaning of "interpreter" is member of a
- 25 profession that specializes in oral translation; and in

- 1 that narrower sense, an interpreter is distinct from a
- 2 translator, which is the sense you've just identified,
- 3 which is a person who specializes in written
- 4 translation.
- 5 Our submission is that, as the great
- 6 majority of courts who have expressed a view on this
- 7 question have recognized, the broader definition makes
- 8 more sense in the particular context at issue here. And
- 9 we say that for a number of reasons.
- 10 The first is that the basic purpose of
- 11 translation in the litigation context is to make
- 12 evidence intelligible to the parties and the court.
- 13 Section 1920 reflects the congressional judgment that
- 14 the cost of making evidence intelligible to the parties
- 15 and the court can be borne by the losing party.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: No, it doesn't. It
- 17 reflects that judgment only if you are right that
- "interpreter" means "translator."
- MR. HIMMELFARB: Well --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, you are begging the
- 21 question. You could say that the one should embrace the
- 22 other. But whether Congress thought that or not is
- 23 mostly dependent on the language Congress used, isn't
- 24 it?
- MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, let me be as clear as

- 1 I possibly can. I'm obviously not standing here saying
- 2 we lose under the language, but it would be a good idea
- 3 for the statute to cover written translation. That's
- 4 not a legitimate enterprise for a court interpreting a
- 5 statute.
- 6 What I'm saying is that the text of the
- 7 statute bears two -- permissibly bears two possible
- 8 meanings. That being the case, it is a legitimate
- 9 enterprise for the Court to say which makes sense, which
- 10 is it most likely that Congress would have intended in
- 11 this particular context?
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Why does your interpretation
- 13 make sense? Shouldn't we view this against the backdrop
- of the American rule on fees, that each party generally
- 15 bears its own costs and only in specific circumstances
- 16 does the loser pay? Now, the taxation of costs is a
- 17 very narrow concept.
- 18 What is the difference between a case in
- 19 which a lot of documents have to be rendered from one
- 20 language to another prior to the court proceeding and a
- 21 case in which there is a mass of scientific evidence
- 22 that has to be interpreted by a scientist? Or financial
- 23 evidence that has to be interpreted by an accountant?
- 24 In those instances, the losing party doesn't pay for the
- 25 winner's expenses, does it?

- 1 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, let me -- let me
- 2 address the first part of your question first, which is
- 3 essentially, as I understand it, isn't there a
- 4 background principle that says costs don't get taxed? I
- 5 actually think insofar as far as tax -- costs are
- 6 concerned, as distinct from attorney's fees, the
- 7 background principle actually goes the other way.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Back up. Costs get taxed,
- 9 but costs are very narrow and they are a very small part
- 10 of the expenses of a party litigating a case. Isn't
- 11 that -- isn't that true?
- MR. HIMMELFARB: I think ordinarily that is
- 13 true, but I don't think that it follows, it follows in
- 14 any way, that there is some sort of tie-breaking
- 15 interpretive canon that says when you are interpreting
- 16 the costs statute, some version of which has been in
- 17 effect since the middle of the 19th century, if you are
- 18 unsure about the scope of it, that you err on the side
- 19 of narrowness rather than breadth. I just don't think
- 20 there is any such interpretive principle.
- 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, aren't you asking for
- 22 an interpretive principle that errs on the side of
- 23 breadth rather than narrowness?
- MR. HIMMELFARB: No, we don't.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Why don't we just ask

- 1 ourselves what's the most common, what's the best
- 2 reading?
- 3 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, I think you obviously
- 4 have to start there in this case, as you do in any
- 5 statutory case; and our submission is that you have two
- 6 possible ordinary definitions. You have two possible
- 7 common usages.
- 8 JUSTICE KAGAN: But the dictionaries
- 9 themselves tell us that one usage is far more common
- 10 than the other.
- 11 MR. HIMMELFARB: I mean, I guess I just have
- 12 to dispute that. We have Webster's, which, you know,
- 13 Justice Scalia's view notwithstanding, is viewed by many
- 14 people as an authoritative dictionary of English
- 15 language. We have got Black's Law Dictionary which I
- 16 think everyone agrees is the leading law dictionary,
- 17 which provides as a definition of "interpreter" the
- 18 broad definition that we advocate here. To be sure --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I quess Black's Law
- 20 Dictionary which -- the editor of it is a -- is
- 21 co-author with me, so I -- I feel obliged to spring to
- 22 his defense --
- 23 (Laughter.)
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Since it is a law
- 25 dictionary, presumably it ought to have taken into

- 1 account the cases you are referring to, many of which
- 2 use the word in -- in this sense, right?
- 3 MR. HIMMELFARB: That's true.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Like Garner.
- 5 MR. HIMMELFARB: That's absolutely true, and
- 6 just as a dictionary, a law dictionary will take those
- 7 cases into account, I think it's ordinarily presumed
- 8 that Congress is taking into account the cases, too, and
- 9 it's taking into account dictionary definitions as well.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: One -- one of the
- 11 things that concerns me is the impact of -- of cost
- 12 allowance on the normal litigation incentives. An
- interpreter in court is one thing. When you suddenly
- 14 get a situation where the costs could be quite large,
- 15 particularly in a -- in a disparate way, not necessarily
- shared by both sides; somebody goes into court; they
- 17 know they are going to have to -- if they lose, they
- 18 will have to pay the interpreter this; and the other
- 19 side comes in and says well, we think we need to submit
- 20 this 10,000 pages of -- of documents, which will have to
- 21 be translated and by the way, if you lose you are going
- 22 to pay for that.
- 23 In other words, it is a much more variable
- 24 element of costs than the interpreter.
- MR. HIMMELFARB: I -- I'm not sure that's

- 1 true. I think in large litigations where you have many,
- 2 many days of trial and potentially pretrial proceedings,
- 3 you could have very large oral translation costs. Where
- 4 there are many depositions, you could have large oral
- 5 translation costs.
- 6 But even if I were to accept the premise of
- 7 your question, it seems to me that the way these costs
- 8 get controlled is through the exercise of district
- 9 court's discretion, not to tax every -- the cost of
- 10 translating every document. The Fifth Circuit, which is
- 11 one of the --
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So what -- so what
- 13 goes into the exercise of that discretion?
- MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, typically the
- 15 criteria for -- I should add, the criteria for taxing
- 16 costs of every sort, not just interpreter costs and not
- 17 just document translation costs, are essentially thought
- 18 to be necessity and reasonableness. So in connection
- 19 with document translation costs, the Fifth Circuit has
- 20 suggested that the way to tax them, the appropriate way
- 21 to tax them might be just to tax the cost of translating
- 22 headings of foreign language documents, which should be
- 23 sufficient to let the lawyer know whether this is a
- 24 relevant document that might bear further translation,
- 25 and then only the documents that really turned out,

- 1 based on the translation of the heading, to have some
- 2 significance to the case. So that's just one example of
- 3 the way the discretion gets exercised.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Himmelfarb, in
- 5 section 1920, there are two provisions that specify
- 6 costs necessarily obtained for use in the case. And the
- 7 interpreter provision doesn't have that qualification,
- 8 doesn't say necessarily obtained for use in the case.
- 9 MR. HIMMELFARB: That -- that's true.
- 10 For -- for --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You are asking to read
- 12 interpreter means to mean translator as well, and to
- import into sub (6) "necessary for use in the case."
- 14 MR. HIMMELFARB: The necessity limitation in
- 15 subsection (6) as with other subsections that don't
- 16 specifically use the word "necessarily" come not from
- 17 that term, but rather from the word "may" in the first
- 18 sentence of the provision, which in tandem with Rule 54
- 19 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, essentially
- 20 make this a discretionary call for the district courts.
- 21 Necessity has long been recognized as one of the
- 22 components of that discretionary determination.
- 23 The reason we say it doesn't make sense to
- 24 have the narrower definition of interpreter be the one
- 25 that Congress enacted is that written document

- 1 translation can be and often is every bit as important
- 2 as oral translation. In many cases, it could be more
- 3 important, in a contract case, for example.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: What do you think on the --
- 5 I guess nobody wants to defend this argument, including
- 6 you, but the First Circuit and several others did look
- 7 to the provision which permits the taxing of costs with
- 8 the making of specific exemplifications or official
- 9 documents, for the costs of making copies of any
- 10 materials obtained for use in the case.
- Now, if you are going to make a copy for use
- of the case of something in Japanese, you are going to
- 13 have to turn it into English. So they included that as
- 14 part of the costs of making copies of the materials and
- 15 documents for use in the case. Now, which is
- 16 discretionary; it's whether you do or whether you don't.
- 17 But that's how several courts could read it. I am just
- 18 wondering, that didn't strike me as so obviously wrong.
- 19 Maybe it's obviously --
- 20 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, I mean, I suppose it
- 21 goes without saying that we would rather win under
- 22 subsection (4) than lose under subsection (6). There
- 23 are --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I am sure you would like to
- 25 win on any subsection.

- 1 (Laughter.)
- 2 MR. HIMMELFARB: That's true, absolutely
- 3 true.
- 4 There are some courts that have suggested
- 5 that document translation fits under subsection (4). I
- 6 think those that have done so have tended to do it --
- 7 tended to do it before section (6) was added in 1978.
- 8 We haven't --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So the history
- 10 is that prior to '78 a serious number -- some number of
- 11 circuits said you can get the translation paid for
- 12 under -- as -- as being necessary to create a copy that
- is usable in court. All right. Then Congress passes,
- 14 this knowing of those cases in principle, and then there
- 15 is a shift after Congress passes this, and then the
- 16 majority of courts say, all right, this is the provision
- 17 that permits it. Is that an accurate statement?
- 18 MR. HIMMELFARB: I think that is accurate.
- 19 Before 1978 some of the courts that taxed document
- 20 translation costs I believe also relied on their
- 21 inherent authority, which at the time was thought to be
- 22 a permissible ground for taxing costs.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Is there anything in the
- 24 history of the '78 statute which suggested that Congress
- 25 didn't want these taxed?

- 1 MR. HIMMELFARB: Absolutely not. There
- 2 is -- there is frankly nothing in the legislative
- 3 history of the Court Interpreters Act really that bears
- 4 on this issue one way or another. There is a lot of
- 5 legislative history on which Petitioner relies, but it's
- 6 all addressed to section 2, which is a separate
- 7 provision which deals with a separate subject, which is
- 8 the appointment of interpreters in cases initiated by
- 9 the United States.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: So if there is no
- 11 legislative history -- there's -- legislative history on
- 12 the other side either, right? Saying that we -- we mean
- 13 this to include --
- MR. HIMMELFARB: No, that's right. We
- 15 don't -- we --
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: So, absent legislative
- 17 history, I guess we have to rely on the words of the
- 18 statute, right?
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: That means you don't have
- 20 to look at this.
- 21 MR. HIMMELFARB: I quess I just go back to
- 22 where I started, which is that we think under dictionary
- 23 definitions and under common usage there are two
- 24 permissible meanings of interpreter.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there are

- 1 two -- there may be two permissible, but you don't
- 2 dispute the fact that it is more natural and common to
- 3 speak of someone interpreting oral communication and
- 4 someone translating written, correct?
- 5 MR. HIMMELFARB: I don't -- I -- I think I
- 6 would dispute it. I don't know whether one is more
- 7 common than the other in any meaningful way. It may be
- 8 slightly more common to use it in its narrower sense to
- 9 refer to a member of a profession, but it certainly is
- 10 common enough that you have district judges from all
- 11 over the country in written opinion just sort of
- 12 matter-of-factly talking about the people who translate
- 13 documents as interpreters.
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, how about in the U.S.
- 15 Code? Is there any place in the U.S. Code where the
- 16 word interpreters clearly encompasses written
- 17 translators?
- 18 MR. HIMMELFARB: I'm not aware of any.
- 19 There aren't -- there -- I frankly don't think there are
- 20 that many places in the United States Code where the
- 21 term "interpreter" is used other than in its sort of
- 22 obvious, narrowest sense based on the context of a
- 23 statute. So, for example, a number of statutes talk
- 24 about funding translators and interpreters who are not
- 25 citizens of the United States. It seems to us that in

- 1 that context what Congress is getting at is the
- 2 interpreter and translator in the narrower sense of
- 3 members of a profession.
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: So in every other case where
- 5 the U.S. Code uses the word "interpreters" means only
- 6 oral translators, and that's the obvious way to use the
- 7 word, but in this case we are supposed to reach a
- 8 different conclusion?
- 9 MR. HIMMELFARB: Justice Kagan, I would say
- 10 this, in every other provision of the United States Code
- in which the interpreter -- the word "interpreter" is
- 12 used, either it's not clear whether it includes document
- 13 translation or the context is such that it strongly
- 14 indicates that it's limited to oral translation. And
- 15 neither of those situations obtains here, in our view.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Let me rephrase your
- 17 answer a different way. You are not -- you don't know
- 18 of any situation in the U.S. Code where translators --
- 19 or the interpreter means translator?
- 20 MR. HIMMELFARB: I am not aware of any other
- 21 provision in the United States Code.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And you checked
- 23 every one, so there is none, right?
- 24 (Laughter.)
- 25 MR. HIMMELFARB: There is -- there is none

- 1 where it is clear that it covers document translation.
- 2 There are -- there are State statutes which we have
- 3 cited which use the term "interpreter" to -- to clearly
- 4 cover document translation, and we cite them in our
- 5 brief.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: Somebody did a computer
- 7 search in the database of, let's say, newspaper articles
- 8 and magazine articles for use of the term "interpreter"
- 9 in relationship to a foreign language. And let's say
- 10 you look at 1,000 hits.
- How many of those do you think would use the
- 12 term "interpreter" to refer to rendering a written
- document from one language to another?
- 14 MR. HIMMELFARB: I would not be at all
- 15 surprised if it was more than 50 percent of the hits
- 16 that used it in its narrower sense.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You are like daring
- 18 Justice Alito to go do this now.
- 19 (Laughter.)
- MR. HIMMELFARB: However --
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: How much would you bet?
- (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE ALITO: If you bet me enough, I will
- 24 look at 1,000, I would be surprised if it's 2 percent.
- MR. HIMMELFARB: I couldn't venture a guess,

- 1 and I would rather not bet you.
- 2 (Laughter.)
- 3 MR. HIMMELFARB: I do want to say something
- 4 about the concept of sight translation, which is
- 5 something that my friend Mr. Fried averted to. Sight
- 6 translation is a hybrid endeavor. It is the oral
- 7 translation of written documents.
- 8 One of the reasons we think that the broader
- 9 meaning of interpreter makes more sense in section 1920
- 10 is that it can't really account in any sensible way for
- 11 sight translation. In this case, for example, our
- 12 counsel -- Kan Pacific's counsel took Taniguchi's
- 13 deposition. And to prepare for the deposition, he
- 14 reviewed -- he had to review some contracts which were
- 15 written in Japanese and some medical records which were
- 16 written in Japanese.
- Now, under our view, having those documents
- 18 translated in writing to prepare for the deposition,
- 19 would result in a potentially taxable cost. Under
- 20 Taniquchi's view, they wouldn't. But it sounds like
- 21 under either party's view, if instead of handing those
- 22 documents off to a document translator to have them
- 23 translated in writing, he had sat down in his law office
- 24 with a member of the interpreter profession and said
- 25 here's a box of documents, please, tell me what they

- 1 say. That would potentially be a taxable cost. That
- 2 seems to me to be a very odd result and one that's --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's an odd result
- 4 because nobody's going to do it. Because at that point
- 5 you don't know who is going to get saddled with the
- 6 cost. So it wouldn't be likely that you would do
- 7 something that would increase the costs, would it?
- 8 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, I don't know that it
- 9 would increase the costs. It may be cheaper to use an
- 10 oral translator -- an -- an oral translator as opposed
- 11 to a written document translator. And there might be a
- 12 variety of reasons why you would choose to use one or
- 13 another, time constraints, the importance of the
- 14 particular document, what have you. But I don't think
- 15 that it's likely that Congress would have thought that
- 16 the potential taxability of the translation --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is it -- is it clear? Does
- 18 anybody contend -- does the other side contend that the
- 19 use of a viva voce translation outside of court is
- 20 covered by the meaning of interpreter here. I assume
- 21 the interpretation here meant interpretation in the oral
- 22 proceeding that is the trial.
- 23 And you are -- you are saying that if we
- 24 hold against you, interpretation will still include all
- 25 oral translations outside of the trial.

- 1 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, I think every court
- 2 that's ever thought about this has found that
- 3 deposition -- oral translation at deposition --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: At deposition, which I
- 5 consider part of the -- part of the trial process, but
- 6 not -- not in the lawyer's office where he asks somebody
- 7 to sit down and -- and read this document to me.
- 8 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, there's -- I don't
- 9 see any basis in the statute or, frankly, in the
- 10 practice of translators or interpreters of drawing that
- 11 line in that particular place.
- 12 And as far as the question of where
- 13 Taniquchi would the Court -- Court draw its concern, I
- 14 think that is a very hard question to answer, because he
- 15 has moved back and forth so many times on that. His
- 16 briefs offer several different -- several different
- 17 narrower definitions of interpreter, sometimes saying
- 18 it's the oral translation of oral speech. Sometimes
- 19 saying it's the oral translation of any language,
- 20 whether it's oral or written. Sometimes saying it's
- 21 limited to in-court interpretation. Sometimes it's
- 22 saying it's not.
- That, it seems to us, is a very good reason
- 24 for adopting the broader interpretation. It seems very
- 25 unlikely that Congress would want courts to get into

- 1 these extremely complicated and, frankly, unprincipled
- 2 line drawing exercises.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: I don't know,
- 4 Mr. Himmelfarb. Why is this any -- any different from
- 5 than any other case in which we draw the line, and we
- 6 find that the result of drawing the line is that we have
- 7 created some close cases, cases that are near the line.
- 8 So, you know, just to give you an obvious
- 9 example, the fact that there are some few minutes in
- 10 every 24-hour period where's it's hard to say that
- 11 something is night or day does not mean that there is no
- 12 night and that there is not day. And that seems to me
- 13 what the question is here. Here you can think of some
- 14 hard cases, but they are just that, they are marginal
- 15 cases.
- 16 MR. HIMMELFARB: I think -- I think line
- 17 drawing is sometimes a necessary exercise because the
- 18 text of the statute compels you to do it. Our
- 19 submission is that the text of this statute doesn't
- 20 compel it, because you have a readily available
- 21 alternative interpretation which doesn't require any
- 22 sorts of these line drawings.
- 23 And as far as whether this is sort of a --
- 24 an outlying -- the examples I give are outlying oddball
- 25 circumstances goes, I don't think they are. Sight

- 1 translation, for example, is a core function of
- 2 interpreters and translators alike.
- 3 And I guess the only other point I would
- 4 say -- make about sight translation, my friend,
- 5 Mr. Fried suggested that that -- that is something that
- 6 could only be covered if it takes place during the
- 7 course of live proceedings, which I think is yet another
- 8 narrowing of the word "interpreter." But as far as I am
- 9 aware, most sight translation is little, if any, sight
- 10 translation actually occurs during the --
- 11 JUSTICE BREYER: I accept the following,
- 12 that there was a history basically giving -- doing what
- 13 you want before the statute, but the statute, nobody
- 14 thought, was going to do that history, that statute is
- 15 capable of being translated but it is a most natural
- 16 thing.
- 17 And so, the question is, do we take -- go
- 18 with the smaller capabilities and leave well enough
- 19 alone or do we say, gee, that is just too hard to
- 20 translate that -- to interpret the statute that way.
- 21 Have you got any other examples in the law?
- 22 I mean, can you think of an example in the law which I
- 23 have been trying to think of where there was a history
- of doing something?
- The statute comes along that makes it a

- 1 little tougher for the judges to do it. And then the
- 2 court says either, sorry, too tough now, or it says let
- 3 sleeping dogs lie.
- 4 MR. HIMMELFARB: Well, I think -- I mean, I
- 5 think it is an important point. And this goes to the
- 6 question of, you know, whether it's difficult for
- 7 district courts to make a determination of whether a
- 8 particular document translation should be taxed, which
- 9 is one of the arguments on the other side. I think the
- 10 history of this is strong evidence that it's not
- 11 difficult.
- 12 Courts have been doing this, certainly,
- 13 since 1978 when this provision was added and even before
- 14 then. And they haven't had any evident difficulty in
- 15 deciding whether to tax documents in its document
- 16 translation, and if so, how much. So I think the -- the
- 17 history certainly bears on the case in that respect.
- 18 A word --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Justice Breyer is
- 20 asking, can you think of an example where words are not
- 21 on their face plain, and the court has looked to the
- 22 practices that have been impugned into that word
- 23 incentive and we decided that they will be accepted in
- the way that practice has given them meaning?
- MR. HIMMELFARB: I can't think of any case

- 1 off the top of my head, and I think it's true that this
- 2 case is a little bit different, because insofar as
- 3 courts were taxing document translation costs before
- 4 1978, they were relying on something other than the word
- 5 "interpreter." So it may be a stretch to say that when
- 6 Congress chose to use the word "interpreter," it was
- 7 necessarily incorporating what courts had previously
- 8 done.
- 9 But I don't think it's entirely irrelevant
- 10 that this has been done for a long time, and I think
- it's not unfair to presume that Congress would have been
- 12 aware of that.
- 13 The Court Interpreters Act has two main
- 14 provisions as relevant here. There's section 2, which
- 15 is really the more -- the main provision -- and then
- 16 section 7, which became 1920(6) in Title 28, which is
- 17 the provision at issue here.
- An important part of Taniguchi's submission
- 19 is that section 2 is limited to oral translators, and
- 20 therefore, it should follow that section 7, the
- 21 provision at issue here, is likewise limited to oral
- 22 translators.
- 23 And our main submission on that -- on that
- 24 question is that Congress actually used different
- 25 language in section 2 and section 7. Section 2 added

- 1 two provisions to Title 28: section 1827 and section
- 2 1828, which are titled, and which address, respectively,
- 3 interpreters in courts of the United States, and special
- 4 interpretation services.
- In section 7, which added subsection (6) to
- 6 1920, Congress does not use those two phrases. Instead,
- 7 it uses the phrase "interpreters" simply, not
- 8 "interpreters in courts of the United States," and then
- 9 "special interpretation services."
- 10 So to the extent that there is any
- 11 appropriate canon about the use of similar or different
- 12 language in different provisions of a statute, it seems
- 13 to us that the appropriate canon is that one should
- 14 presume that when Congress uses different language, it
- 15 intends different meanings.
- 16 I do want to respond to Mr. Fried's point
- 17 about the number of times the word "interpreter" is used
- 18 in section 2. And as I understand his point, it's
- 19 that -- it's that it is much more frequently used by
- 20 itself than it is with the -- with the words "in courts
- 21 of the United States."
- What the statute actually does is add -- say
- 23 that it's adding section 1827, which it calls
- 24 "interpreters in courts of the United States." It then
- 25 has a subsection that says that "the administrative

- 1 office of the United States court has to establish a
- 2 program to facilitate the use of interpreters in courts
- 3 of the United States."
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Where are you
- 5 reading from?
- 6 MR. HIMMELFARB: I'm sorry, this is the red
- 7 brief, la of the appendix, which is the very beginning
- 8 of the Court Interpreters Act. And then there's
- 9 subsection (c), flipping over to the next page -- I'm
- 10 sorry, subsection (b) -- which says that "the director
- 11 has to certify interpreters in courts of the United
- 12 States."
- So what it does at the beginning of the
- 14 statute is establish this thing called a certified
- 15 interpreter in courts of the United States. When it
- 16 thereafter speaks of interpreter simply, that's just a
- 17 shorthand for a certified interpreter in courts of the
- 18 United States. So it seems to us that as far as the
- 19 Court Interpreters Act is concerned, even if it's true
- 20 that section 2 uses the term in the narrower sense, it
- 21 doesn't necessarily follow that it's used in the
- 22 narrower sense in section 7.
- 23 And the only point I would add about that,
- 24 as we set -- point out in our brief, it's really not
- 25 clear that section 2 is limited to oral translators.

- 1 Soon after the Court Interpreters Act was
- 2 enacted, and for approximately 16 years thereafter, the
- 3 administrative office would publish these notices in the
- 4 Federal Register notifying the public that they were --
- 5 there were going to be certification exams for
- 6 interpreters under section 2 of the Court Interpreters
- 7 Act. These were pretty streamlined notices, not long at
- 8 all.
- 9 And one of the main aspects, the main
- 10 sections of the notice, was a list of what the director
- 11 of the administrative office said were the -- were the
- 12 duties of interpreters in courts of the United States.
- 13 And to be sure, it listed simultaneous and consecutive
- 14 interpreting, but it -- it listed sight translation and
- 15 it listed document translation.
- So at a minimum, section 2 is not
- 17 sufficiently clearly limited to oral translators, that
- 18 the director of the administrative office couldn't issue
- 19 these notices saying otherwise.
- 20 I quess the -- the last point I want to make
- 21 about other statutes, some of which use the term
- 22 "interpreter" and "translator" together, I have already
- 23 addressed that in part by saying that in many of those
- 24 statutes, it really is pretty clearly used in the
- 25 narrower sense, because you're talking about members of

- 1 a profession.
- 2 The -- the only other thing I would say
- 3 about that is that the premise of Taniguchi's reliance
- 4 on those statutes seems to be that it would be strangely
- 5 redundant for Congress to speak in other statutes about
- 6 interpreters and translators together, if, in fact, the
- 7 two terms could be used interchangeably, and that
- 8 redundancy should be avoided.
- 9 But subsection (6) of 1920 itself has a
- 10 redundancy in it, because it covers both interpreters
- 11 and special interpretation services. And I don't think
- 12 anybody could dispute that anyone who carries out a
- 13 special interpretation service is an interpreter.
- So it's not at all odd to have redundancy
- 15 when Congress is addressing the subject of translation.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 17 Mr. Fried, you have 5 minutes remaining.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL S. FRIED
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER
- MR. FRIED: Very briefly, Your Honor, three
- 21 points.
- In the first place, Justice Breyer, I just
- 23 wanted to let you know that the first decision -- first
- 24 appellate decision construing 1920(6) to encompass
- 25 document translation was the D.C. Circuit's decision in

- 1 Lam Quy in 1981.
- 2 Second, Mr. Himmelfarb noted that Black's
- 3 Law Dictionary takes a definition that arguably could
- 4 encompass document translation, but he didn't mention
- 5 that the operative version of Black's in 1978 when this
- 6 statute was passed did not -- was a different definition
- 7 that excluded document translation.
- 8 And this change in the definition occurred
- 9 in 1999, in the seventh edition, after a number of these
- 10 judicial decisions construing 1920(6) had come down,
- 11 which supports Your Honor's observation that it could
- 12 very well merely reflect a recognition of these
- 13 decisions, rather than independent support for them.
- 14 Finally, Your Honors, Mr. Himmelfarb cited
- 15 certain notices issued by the administrative office from
- 16 many years ago. These brief notices were ministerial
- 17 documents that simply announced a forthcoming
- 18 examination. The office has issued the quidance to
- 19 judiciary policy, which is -- which is the fully
- 20 expressed views on this issue. And it's posted on the
- 21 office's website. It's current as of June 9, 2011 --
- 22 and expressly provides that document translation is not
- 23 a part of the statutory services of an interpreter.
- If there are further questions, I'd be happy
- 25 to address them.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
2	The case is submitted.
3	(Whereupon, at 12:11 p.m., the case in the
4	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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